A Civil War-era flag takes center stage in Neville Public Museum in Green Bay, Wis., thanks to a $10,000 preservation project. Distinguished by a great star formed of 34 stars within the blue field, the 12- by 8-foot flag was hand-sewn in 1861 by local resident Mattie Underwood. Script on one of the stars reads “From Major Shaylaur, Old Fort Howard during the War, 1865.” From these details, museum curator Lisa Kain determined the flag flew at Fort Howard, an 1861 recruiting center for Union troops. The 34 stars in the canton represent the states in the Union in 1859. The flag went on display on May 30, 2018, the 200th anniversary of the creation of Brown County, home to Green Bay.

The Wisconsin flag retains the vibrant colors that enticed recruits in 1861.

**QUIZ**

HOLDING THE LINE

Name this monument and send your answer to dshoaf@historynet.com or to 1919 Gallows Road, Suite 400, Vienna, VA 22182-4038, marked “Thunderstorm.” The first correct answer will win a book.

Congratulations to August issue winner Mary Alice Pickett of New Port Richey, Fla. She correctly identified the Washington Monument near Boonsboro, Md., that Union troops used as a signal station during the 1862 Maryland Campaign.

On Wisconsin!

In May 1861, William S. Tippett joined the 1st Virginia Infantry in Wheeling, Va. His enlistment paralleled that of thousands of Virginians that spring, but his was a Union unit. When the regiment’s three-month commitment was up, Tippett continued his service in the 1st West Virginia Infantry and fought for the duration of the war. He colorfully explained in 1864 that, “one dont like to quit when the war is most over.” Tippett’s wartime diaries—six volumes covering 1861 through 1864— are held at the Library of Virginia and are not available online. But one eight-page letter that he wrote—regarded as one of the most detailed descriptions of Civil War prison life and food—has been digitized and is available. Tippett wrote it when he was about to be paroled in the spring of 1864.

The letter, featured in Virginia Tech’s Special Collections Online, is rightly celebrated, but some will be far more curious about the Union service of this man from one of the Confederacy’s most celebrated states. Granted, he was in a heavily Unionist area when the war began, but he may have been living in Bath County in 1861, which remained part of Virginia and reminds us of the divided nature of this region. Other readers, though, may care more about his relationship to his wife, Maggie. What did she endure, along with daughters Kate and Anna, for more than three years as a Union family in a divided region with William far from home?

Virginia Tech’s “The American Civil War” digital collection also includes Confederate accounts, such as a November 1863 letter that captures Mima Brown’s frustration that her brother was freezing in the field while the local provost guard strode around Pulaski, Va., in warm coats. Dozens of other collections contain multiple digitized items, and most of these have been transcribed. The letters of Milton and George Kuntz, along with their cousin George Miller, reveal the motivations and frustrations of the Kuntz brothers and their relatives while serving in Virginia units. Tennessee widow and Unionist Elizabeth Hughes’ 1868 claim for damages reminds us again of the divisions border state families endured.

This is a large online repository, but remember that digital collections are just the tip of the archival iceberg. If possible, always follow up with an on-site visit. Still, Virginia Tech’s digitized Civil War collection is worthwhile for anyone who studies this endlessly fascinating conflict.

—Susannah J. Ural

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THE WAR ON THE NET

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